



## Holiday Traditions of Mexico "Feliz Navidad"



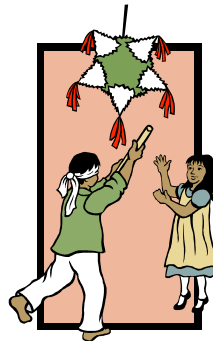
Mexicans share many traditions with the Spanish. Their main Christmas celebration is called La Posada, which is a religious procession that reenacts the search for shelter by Joseph and Mary before the birth of Jesus. During the procession, the celebrants go from house to house carrying the images of Mary and Joseph looking for shelter.



Santa Claus is not predominant, but the bright red suit is represented in the traditional flower of the season. This flower is the poinsettia, which has a brilliant red star-shaped bloom. It is believed that a young boy walking to the church to see the nativity scene showing the birth of Jesus had realized on the way that he had no gift to offer the Christ child so he gathered up some plain green branches as he walked in he was laughed at but upon placing the branches near the manger they started to bloom a bright red poinsettia flower on each branch



The Mexican children receive gifts. On Christmas day, they are blindfolded and taken to try and break a decorated clay piñata that dangles and swings at the end of a rope. Once the piñata has been broken, the children clamber to recover the candy that was inside the piñata.



Those children who have been good also on January 6th receive a gift from the Three Wise Men.



Mexicans attend a midnight mass service, which is called la Misa Del Gallo or "the rooster's mass," and at the mass, they sing lullabies to Jesus.



Spanish Tradition **The Christmas Eve gaiety is interrupted at midnight by the ringing of bells calling the families to "La Misa Del Gallo" (The Mass of the Rooster). It is called the "Mass of the Rooster" because it is said that the only time that a rooster crowed at midnight was on the day that Jesus was born. The most beautiful of these candlelight services is held at the monastery of Montserrat, high in the mountain near Barcelona, which is highlighted by a boy's choir describes as performing the Mass in "one pure voice."**



## Holiday Drinks



## Rompoppe (Mexican Egnog)

*Rompoppe*, or "Mexican eggnog," is one version of the many combinations of egg, milk, sugar and spirits that are traditionally used to toast the winter holidays in Europe and the Americas.

Rompoppe is strong, sweet and meant to be sipped, so small glasses are in order. Refrigerated, it will keep indefinitely.

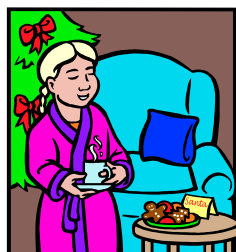
- 1 quart whole milk
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1/4 cup finely ground almonds or almond meal (optional, see Note)
- 12 egg yolks
- 2 cups light rum or brandy

Combine the milk, sugar, vanilla and cinnamon stick (and ground almonds, if you are using them) in a large saucepan. Over medium heat, bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, stirring constantly, for 15 minutes. Remove from heat, and cool to room temperature.

Beat the egg yolks until thick and lemony. Remove the cinnamon stick from the milk mixture, and gradually whisk the egg yolks into the milk mixture. Return to low heat and, stirring constantly, cook until mixture coats a spoon. Remove from heat and allow to cool completely.

Add the rum or brandy to the mixture, stir well. Transfer to a container and cover tightly. Refrigerate for 1 or 2 days before serving. Makes 1-1/2 quarts.

**Note:** While not strictly traditional, many Mexican cooks believe ground almonds improve the texture and lend a delicate flavor to Rompoppe.



## Champurrado (Chocolate Atole)

- 6 cups whole milk
- 1 cup masa harina--corn flour

2 cups water  
1 cup brown sugar, firmly packed  
3 oz. unsweetened chocolate, grated  
1 cinnamon stick

Heat the milk and chocolate in a saucepan, stirring to dissolve the chocolate. When chocolate is completely dissolved, remove from the heat and set aside to keep warm. Mix the masa harina with the water in another saucepan; place over low heat, add the cinnamon stick, and cook until the mixture has thickened and the masa becomes translucent. Add the chocolate milk and sugar. Stir to dissolve the sugar and simmer for a few minutes. Remove the cinnamon stick and serve the champurrado hot in cups or mugs.

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